

Pseudoscorpions

Order: Pseudoscorpionida



Pseudoscorpion (actual body size: 1/8 inch long, not including claws). Photo by Carolyn Klass.

Pseudoscorpions or book scorpions are quite harmless despite their fierce looks. Occasionally they are found in houses, between the pages of a book, or between the boards in buildings, but most often they are found out of doors under bark, in moss, under leaves and in similar places.

Pseudoscorpions resemble true scorpions because they possess large claw-like pedipalps, however, they do not have a sting and are too small to bite. Most are less than 3/16 inch (5 mm) in length. The abdomen is short and oval, and the body very flat. Many are able to walk backwards as well as forwards.

There are over 200 species known from North America, but because of their small size and secretive habits, pseudoscorpions are rarely seen. They usually produce fewer than two dozen offspring per brood, although more than one brood can occur each year. Pseudoscorpions are generally considered beneficial arthropods because they feed on small insects and mites, which are found under the bark of dead trees, in leaf litter, or under stones. They are active during the spring, summer and fall, but spend the winter in a silken cocoon, which they construct in late autumn. It is believed that the adults may live for 2-3 years.

One interesting aspect of the behavior of pseudoscorpions is their apparent ability to "hitch-hike" on other insects and small animals. The pseudoscorpion holds on tightly to the leg of another insect or animal and is transported from one place to another. It is this hitchhiking ability that leads to occasionally finding one or two in the house.

No control is necessary. The pseudoscorpions can be swept up and put back outside when found.

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